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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0869
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4089
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 4359
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 9442
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 2342
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3747
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9420
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0780
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0734
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000805

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DEPT FOR SCA/INS, SCA/RA
NSC FOR RICHELSON

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SUBJECT: MORE DETAILS ON SAARC OBSERVER STATUS FOR U.S.

REF: KATHMANDU 791

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

APRIL 10 SUB-MINISTERIAL MEETING TO DISCUSS OBSERVER STATUS
GUIDELINES

11. (C) In a March 24 conversation with Emboff, Rajiv Chander, Director, India, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Secretariat, explained that, in light of the agreement to extend observer status to China and Japan and interest by South Korea and the U.S. (reftel), foreign secretaries would discuss guidelines for adding observers at

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the sub-ministerial meeting in Dhaka on April 10. (Note: Reftel incorrectly referred to the April 10 meeting as a ministerial meeting. End Note.) Chander said that SAARC foreign secretaries would meet again in July in order to prepare the issues to be discussed by ministers at the SAARC ministerial meeting later that month. He noted that a "yes" vote had been all that was needed to add China and Japan as observers at the 2005 Dhaka summit. Chander explained that member states would likely again vote on adding observers at the next summit, which may not be held until the first quarter of 2007. Chander mentioned that the SAARC charter would not need to be amended to give observer status to China and Japan or any others interested in observer status, but would have to be amended to add Afghanistan as a new SAARC member.

OBSERVER STATUS IS VOLUNTARY

12. (C) Chander explained that at this point observer status was purely voluntary and that there were no plans for any financial or legal obligations for observer states. He added that any formal technical assistance or other cooperation desired between an observer and a member state would have to be worked out bilaterally. Chander outlined that while procedures for observer states were evolving, he would expect observers to be invited to inaugural sessions at annual

summits and perhaps to other organized meetings between member states and observers on the margins of the summit. He mentioned this was similar to the way the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) handled its observer states.

MORIARTY